

Acton Historic District Commission
Meeting of August 23, 2011
Minutes

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TOWN CLERK, ACTON

Meeting was called to order at 7PM by Chair, Kathy Acerbo-Bachman (KAB). Also present were David Honn (DH), Anita Rogers (AR), Ronald Rose (RR) and David Barrat (DB) and Mike Gowing, BoS Liaison arrived at 7:40.

Dick Calandrella, Derrick Chin, Nancy Dinkle, and Harry Mink, members of the Economic Development Committee were also present.

There were no citizens' concerns.

Approval of meeting minutes was deferred to the September 13, 2011 meeting.

7:10 DH provided an update on the proposed cantilevered crossing signal for Mass. Ave. in West Acton. The DPU is to review West Acton with the town engineer perhaps this week. There is a new consultant who appears more reasonable than his predecessor. There is a dangerous intersection on Mass. Ave. between tracks and street when trucks are parked in certain areas of the Central Street side of the tracks. Corrective steps would include narrowing the street, eliminating two parking spaces near the tracks, limiting parking to compact cars altering curb lines. Need to comply with federal regulations. May meet again next week.

South Acton Train Station: The group met two weeks ago. Drawings at the 60% design level have been prepared. Anticipate going to bid before the end of year. Seventy per cent design level will be done by September and 100% by October. Bidding contemplates start date of around March of 2012. Construction will take 18 months. Bidding came in favorably, below estimates. Landscape budget is \$60K. Nice to have the Town kick in money for landscaping. North facing parking lot entry apron on town property. T is willing to take suggestions for landscaping enhancement just not pay for them.

KAB Rough estimate what would threshold be for decent landscaping? DH \$100K for a better surface. South side access is skimpy. Estimate is between \$100-150K. Contact SATSAC Deduct alternate and add alternate both possible. It's their call. Not a big a problem. What is deadline? December for specs for plans.

Save? On Hardscape not too much chance to do that. Better to enhance with concrete pavers. Hopes Windows possible use in the new train station and are thinner. There is a huge difference. Used in high quality building. Still working on "T" symbol. Will be similar to the "T" symbol at Porter Square.

Vytex-would be a good choice around the ramping. Not as manicured as boxwood.

7:30PM 278 Arlington Street: Dan is not coming. Will not use rubber roof. Will use shingles instead. The roof has a 2/12 pitch. This would be an in-kind replacement. Need to contact the roofing company. Need to the waive application due for voting for rubber roof. This is deniable. Amendment to asphalt shingles. It would mean a certificate of non-applicability for the use of asphalt shingles. Architectural shingles would require abutter notices. Three-tab shingles. Vote on 9/13 to permit extension to October 12, 2011.

7:45 OMR Orientation Signage. There are three items. Twin Seafood stair tower on the right near yellow house. Side figure a way for signage for behind the stairs. #1 Use of signage to direct to Village Art, which needs sign. #2 Two possible asymmetrical windows to provide more glass in restaurant. #3 A flight of steps-signs to connect with fence where stairs go. A fourth item; Awning on deck on west side.

OMR Mathias Rosenberg and Javier. The goal is a sign on the gray building. If possible, discuss windows. Packages to be left. The awning discussion to be continued to 9/13 at 8-8:45.

Signage: Signs On the #2 Enlarged drawing of space between 537 and 541. Considered old sign to reach across. Abandoned this for three signs with planter box with recessed light. Section shows 2" space for air circulation.

Feedback-AR Is comfortable with this arrangement as opposed to using a banner. Village Art, tenant C. Each sign had distinct personality. It is folksy. Use a bigger planter. Use landscaping down at the bottom. MR Agrees, it is folksy. AR Keep the signs and lettering uniform rather than having to come to us for each sign. Use a template. KAB likes this solution. It is better without flower boxes. Signs seem large. Javier: Idea was to cover fence. Flower box would conceal the light fixture. DH Use same light from an elliptical(?) sign light. Hope tenants have some sense of graphic. Use guild signs. RR Likes the use of a flower box. Provide space for lights. Light loose quality at it reaches bottom sign. Light from ground up. Use small LEDs. DB Okay with signs and flower boxes. Vote on window box, four in favor and three not in favor. RR What would replace it. Additive; it softens and gives a cap. Arch top easy to remove. KAB May be too high. RR Could leave with Box. Motion to approve Application 1128A including tenant signs. Stair enclosures except window box mounted slightly lower. Tenants signs to be individually approved. The signs to be made of wood. Mathias: Zoning approval finding find ok different location than is permitted in ZBL specification requirements. Vote was unanimous.

8:00 Sign Enforcement Overview with EDC - Public Posting.

KAB To review Things re sign enforcement. AR presenting findings for discussion to change sign by-laws. Roland Bartl, Planning Director, present.

KAB Sign violations enforcement is time-consuming and is mushrooming. No consistent documentation. Approval is an issue. How do we tackle this issue? Terra Friedrichs had collected all addresses of signs in the West Acton district and put them in an Excel worksheet and gave it to Frank Ramsbottom. What was permitted by HDC? What is in violation? Frank R. is taking this on. Less than 100 properties with signs in West Acton.

FR Update - from meeting for further discussion. Need to get some effort going with movement forward to have information workshops; have business owners in West Acton with a map created and a letter going out concerning workshop with invitation to please come. First meeting will be Monday, September 26 at noon at the New View common house. Again on 9/27 in the evening at OMR, and last one on Friday 9/28 at 7AM at Theater III. The three presentations will be the same for all West Acton business owners. After that the next step will be a survey of what exists. This must be done in baby steps 1-2 blocks at a time and announce this to get things going- to have them go to HDC or Scott Mutch. Will

work better in small steps. Start before Christmas. Stop between Thanksgiving and Christmas/New Years.

Not sure about content of the program in light of concern with window signs. Invite comments from HDC and deal with sign holders for approval.

AR Put all in one page with bullet points. Do not allow window signs. Need to think about this before Annual Town Meeting. Rules and regulations can be changed after public hearing and without town meeting approval. Refer to existing sign guidelines as of 8/23/11.

Missing components. Each business is to have one permanent sign only, and a sign for temporary importance. What about guidelines? None concerning temporary signs. It is out of our jurisdiction. "Open" "Closed" "Sale" are excludable, will be exceptions and need no permits. They are not subject to approval.

Backlit signs are not allowed under section 7 of the ZBL.

KAB Want a final version before educational meeting. Town Counsel needs 2-3 weeks to review. One particular violator is "Sweet Bites" who has two signs where only one is allowed.

KAB Official documents to public must be clear. Disclosures need to be in clear language. Stage One, A summary for the 9/26 version. Collect feed back from meetings- what do businesses want; what was expressed, what would the business like to have.

RR Need to propose where we want to go.

For the next few minutes discuss what we want to change.

DH In historic districts wood letters on signs, stenciled signs; signs lit from behind; use of different materials besides wood, stone signs or gilt signs.

FR Basic materials. ZBL approved different materials. HDC should consider replacing PB in historic districts.

DC HDC should consider other materials. Paint to be a material. Want materials that weather naturally. Consider window signs and the tradition of hand lettered window signs that can be graphically done. Neon signs can be tastefully done. Total area of signs- permeability; window signs affixed or hung on inside of window. When a person can walk between signs and window, this is not a window sign. A window display is not going to touch the glass.

A few examples of sign issues:

1. Window signs vs. hand lettering; none are approved.
2. Back lit signs
3. Multiple signs; each on different sides of the building and not visible at the same time.
4. Having a major and minor sign each from a different viewing angle.
5. Projecting and window pedestrian signs. Define window signs Specify with bullets.
6. Permanent vs. temporary signs; temporary signs are not regulated unless they exceed 25% of space.

RB We can set standards in regulations for signs that are defined in the by-law. What about illuminated wall sign with lettering in front causing silhouettes; reliance on ambient light.

We need to consult with Town counsel for disclaimers. Changes start record changes. Collect data from HDC members and EDC. Send suggestions for next meeting. Excluding from home exclusions 2 sq. feet vs. 6 sq. feet. RB Attend any one of the workshops. Scott Mutch will be there. Just one to attend.

Nancy Dinkel (ND) encouraged by the openness. Add to list of what we have for CPC appointments. Add guild signs to what we have for CPC presentation.

We will have Phase II on 9/13 from 8:45 to 9.

Need to identify violations. For HDC compare what is out there with the record. Make a finding and direct Frank Ramsbottom to formally enforce.

9:00 PM Theater III David Costro General Contractor. Jamie Watt and Ed Mullin from Blue Fin in attendance. DH Liaison In southern Vermont there are buildings similar to T-III without metal roofs. Disassemble steeple. No metal or slate and changed cost. Cedar shakes are more expensive. Issues of maintenance and longevity. RR Sharing Unitary metal. Interlocking shingle floating seam type. Different options-flat lock. Approximately \$15K-25K, standing seam \$15k cost. Prefer flatter configuration. Seam could look hokey. Sheen is an issue. Triot (?) ribs at hips. Bone white or stone white. Bone white is the lighter of the two. Make extra bend on the cap. Do more research. Conduct via email. Rank the ideas in order of preference.

White shingles have longevity and cheaper by using 30-year asphalt shingles.

DH Ranking according to preference:

#1 Horizontal (?) seam Bay white with hipped rib pieces;

#2 Asphalt shingles White Nice detail 30-50 year three tab shingles;


#3 Standing seam bone white.

T-III to communicate with DH. The issue is the rib detail.

Lights on front of building to be 12" spheres with smaller ones pointing down on sides over doorways. Venting in foundation another issue.

Meeting adjourned at 9:50

Respectfully submitted


David T. Barrat,
Secretary